REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance, in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks, are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-24 are pending in the application.

Applicant notes with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 7, 8, 10, 19, 20 and 22 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. In order to avoid any unnecessary claim fees, Applicant has not rewritten these claims in independent form at this time.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-6, 9, 11-18, 21, 23 and 24 under 37 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Berger et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,169,284). Applicant respectfully traverses for at least the following reasons. Applicant amended dependent claims 1 and 13 to make them a more accurate translation of the original German claims. Applicant respectfully submits that the true translation of independent claims 1 and 13 are patentable over all references of record.

Berger (U.S. Patent No. 5,169,284) relates to a de-palletizing device 1, intended for supplying a packaging machine 10, wherein the de-palletizing is from a pallet 11 that is loaded with stacks of blanks 5. The stacks 5 are arranged in a specific number of layers, formed with a specific number of rows of stacks. In particular, Berger deals with a claw unit 2. The claw unit is suspended from a support 20, which is attached to a carriage 12. The carriage 12 can move along the axes Y and Z. The carriage 12 is attached to a different carriage 13, such that it can also be displaced along a guide rail 14 along the axis X.

In addition, the support 20 for the claw unit 2 is connected to the carriage 12 in such a way that it can pivot around the axis Z. Figure 2A shows a claw from the side, while it is in the process of gripping a stack of blanks 50. A front claw portion 3 of the claw and a rear claw portion 4 of the claw are suspended from the support 20. The front claw portion 3 is provided with an upper pressing plate 30 which is slightly less wide than a stack of blanks 5 and extends in the direction of stack 50. The upper plate 30 can be lowered. The rear part 4 of the claw consists of a lower plate 40 which can pivot around a horizontal axis. The lower plate 40 is attached to a carriage 43, which can be moved along a guide rail 44 along the X axis, wherein the guide rail 44 is connected to the carriage 43. Owing to the fact that several claws are arranged side-by-side below the support 20, each of the carriages 43 is connected to an adjacent carriage 43 by means of a driving plate 43A which extends over the complete width of the claw unit 2. At approximately half the width of the claw unit 2, meaning in the center of the driving plate 43A, it is attached to a rod 46A of a drive plate, formed with a dual-acting pneumatic cylinder 46 that is connected to the support 20. All back portions 4 of the claw can be pushed back by operating the lifting screw 46, as shown in Figure 2A. Figures 3 and 4 show the claw with the lower plate 40 pushed forward. For gripping a stack 50, the piston rods 23 are lowered onto the stack 50 to hold it in place while, at the same time, the cylinder 31 must be operated and the support plate 34 as well as the upper plate 30 lowered, so that the lower end of the support plate 34 pushes heavily onto the inserted cardboard sheet and/or the stack 50 below. In this way, a slight indentation 52 is created behind the stack 50 to be gripped. Figure 2B shows a view of

this situation, as seen from the back. Once a stack is gripped by the claw, the claw with the stack can be lifted up far enough in the direction of the Z axis to be above the remaining stacks, and such that it can subsequently be moved onto the transporting elements (conveying belts) by displacing it along the X axis.

This de-palletizing device differs structurally as well as functionally from the device recited in claims 1-24 of the current application. The device of claims 1-24 is structured to be used for the transport of individual label stack rows, which are lifted off a pallet and transported to a further processing apparatus.

In addition, claims 1 and 13 recite that "the clamp functions to compress the stack to be strapped ..." and is structured "to transport the strapped stack ...". For example, hoop-encased, or strapped, stacks of printed sheets are formed, for which the stack printed sheets are compressed for the encasing (strapping) operation and the encased stacks are subsequently conveyed further. Berger says nothing about strapped stacks.

A clamping arrangement as disclosed in Berger cannot be used for this task. The claw according to Berger is not designed to form hoop-encased or strapped, stacks and cannot contribute to this operation. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-24 are in condition for allowance and requests that the rejection under 35 USC § 102(b) be withdrawn.

Applicant has addressed all of the Examiner's objections and rejections, and respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance.

Applicant's representative encourages the Examiner to contact him at the below-listed number if it may help to advance the prosecution of this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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